

The Sixty-Surgeon Bill Debate.

Knowing we can publish nothing more interesting to our soldier friends, we place below a synopsis of the running debate in the Senate, in which General Logan, the gallant soldier and the devoted friend of soldiers, won a great victory. The debate will be continued in our March number.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I believe to-day there are more men improperly upon the pension-roll, who are as able as you or I to earn a living, than there are survivors of the war of 1812. I believe to-day there are a great many pensioners upon the roll who contracted no disease whatever, but who have improperly and fraudulently in many cases gotten there. We are told by the Commissioner, and I think at one time we were told by the former chairman of the Committee on Pensions, the Senator from Kansas, [Mr. Ingalls,] who is always careful in his statements, that he believed five or six million dollars was annually paid out to fraudulent pension claimants, and the Commissioner of Pensions now estimates that there is in the neighborhood of five or six millions or 10 per cent. of the entire amount fraudulently and improperly paid. Hence the necessity of some such bill as the one now pending. Although I have not examined this carefully, and I cannot say that I approve of all of its features, I am sure that if some such bill can be passed and go into effect, this Government will save five or six millions a year from fraudulent pensions and punish frauds in many cases.

Mr. LOGAN. Now I should like to ask the Senator a question right there. If he thinks or if the Commissioner of Pensions states to the country that he is paying five or six million dollars of fraudulent pension money, will the Senator please explain to the Senate why the Commissioner paid it if he knows it is fraudulent pension money?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. That is just what this bill wants to find out; and that is just what the Committee on Pensions now are trying to pass the bill for, to find out.

Mr. LOGAN. The Senator cannot get out of it in that way. I say that if the Commissioner of Pensions reports that he pays five or six million dollars of pension money that is fraudulent, he cannot make that report if it is truthful unless he knows of the fraud, and if he does he is a dishonest man.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Neither the Pension Commissioner nor myself knew of the fraud. I said it was so estimated.

Mr. LOGAN. Upon what does he estimate if he does not know the fraud? Here under the statute he has a right to cut off any pensioner any moment.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. We understand that; but whenever a bill or an amendment is offered to cut them off in wholesale, if they are there, there is some opposition to it from some quarter. I am not referring to the Senator from Illinois for I do not know that he opposes it.

Mr. LOGAN. I am opposed to it.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I did not know it.

Mr. LOGAN. You know it now.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I am sorry to know it, for I believe that it is his duty and mine to hunt down pension frauds and punish them, and not allow the taxpayers to suffer from them.

Mr. LOGAN. I will not allow the Senator to place me in such a position, for I am as ready to hunt down frauds as anybody; but I say that a man who makes a report that he pays five or six million dollars annually fraudulently is a dishonest man unless he knows some facts to base it on. He has no right to state it unless he knows the fact. He has no right to pay the money fraudulently, and if he does he should not state the fact unless he can show it to be so. I say that no such argument as that is a fair argument in favor of a bill.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I remind the Senator that neither the Commissioner of Pensions nor myself stated that we knew the fact to be so.

Mr. LOGAN. If you do not know the fact, you should not state it.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. That is the Senator's opinion; but I have an opinion, and I have the right to state what I believe.

Mr. LOGAN. I say if there is a pensioner on the roll who is receiving his money fraudulently, it is the duty of the Commissioner of Pensions, under the law, to cut him off from the list.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. That is just what we are trying to do by this bill.

Mr. LOGAN. No, sir; I beg the Senator's pardon. We shall see whether you are trying it or not. When you stand in the Senate Chamber and say that money is paid to men fraudulently, before accusing the soldier who receives it dishonestly, you should know what you state to be a fact.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Now, I must take the floor.

Mr. LOGAN. Very well. You should give us some evidence. Let us have some evidence. Let us have some evidence.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. We have heard thunder before to-day, Mr. President, but generally there was more in it than there is to-day.

Mr. LOGAN. I will only say to the Senator that he has heard thunder, and so have others, but the thunder never came from his quarter. Mr. President, I am unfortunate sometimes, especially when I get into a colloquy with my very genial and kind and generous friend from West Virginia. He talks about thunder. I have heard him make that speech before. It is not new to me. He made the same speech to me once before, and I did not then understand it because it was, in common and vulgar parlance, "very thin" to come from a Senator who is a great mathematician, who is certainly entitled to much credit for the mathematical accuracy with which he has demonstrated many propositions before this country. I have been very much surprised at the argument made by the Senator from Virginia and the Senator from West Virginia. If you put the two together, although the latter was trying to enforce the former, I can demonstrate, I think, that the arguments will not hang together. The Senator from Virginia says he wants this bill passed to facilitate the pensioners' business. I do not mistake him when I say that. He says that claim agents are opposed to it. Now, if this bill is for facilitating of the pensioners' business

and the obtaining of pensions, why should pension agents oppose it?

Mr. WITHERS. It deprives them of their profits.

Mr. LOGAN. I do not understand that and cannot see it. The trouble is they get no profits unless the pensions are allowed; and if pensions are not being allowed the profits are not derived.

The Senator from West Virginia says that if the pensions are allowed it will cost the Government an excessive amount of money. Now, the Senator says he wants to facilitate the obtaining of pensions, and yet he says it will cost an enormous amount of money to the tax-payers of this country. I should like to ask the Senator from West Virginia if he is for this bill and it will advance the interests of the pensioners, why does he undertake to demonstrate this enormous amount that it will cost the people?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Will the Senator give way?

Mr. LOGAN. I will certainly give way to the Senator to explain.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I am for this bill or any other bill that will punish the fraudulent pensioners and give those justly to pensioners their money.

Mr. LOGAN. That is the reason, is it?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. That is the reason. My desire is to reach those who are receiving pensions dishonestly, if there be such, and I believe there are. I want to reach the dishonest ones; the honest ones I want to pay.

Mr. LOGAN. Now, the Senator says he is in favor of this bill because it will reach fraudulent pensioners. If that is the merit of this bill, why all this array of figures showing the amount of pension money the people have got to pay? Has that anything to do with the argument for detecting fraudulent pensioners?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I think it is a good bill; and the necessity of passing this bill or some other to prevent the payment of a part of this money itself to fraudulent persons is shown by the figures representing our present expenditure.

Mr. LOGAN. Then how will it prevent frauds? The Senator does not know that there are fraudulent pensioners; he cannot demonstrate how this will prevent fraud, how it is going to do it; and let me call his attention and that of the chairman of the Pensions Committee to one thing. Under the law as it exists to-day, the Commissioner of Pensions has the right to have any pensioner in the United States examined by a surgeon at any time he sees proper. Is not that true? The Commissioner has the right to send a special agent, a special deputy of his, to examine any pensioner in the United States, no matter where he lives, at any time. That is the law. The Commissioner may appoint additional surgeons for examinations. That is the law now. He may appoint additional inspectors, if you may call them by that name, to examine pensioners. That is the law now. The Commissioner of Pensions may suspend any pensioner on the roll. That is the law. He may stop any pensioner receiving his money. That is the law now. Then, tell me how it is that you want a law with more power to stop frauds than exists now. If the Commissioner has power to suspend any pensioner, has power to re-examine him, has power to take new evidence, has power to send a special agent to examine him, to bring him before a surgeon for examination, tell me what more power you desire should be committed to his hands for the purpose of detecting frauds?

With all the power that can be given to a man under the laws of the United States, that Commissioner is to-day the empowered to detect fraud, to dismiss pensioners, to have them re-examined anywhere, at any place, by surgeons appointed, and to appoint additional surgeons, to appoint additional inspectors; and with all this power you say he cannot detect fraud. Why, sir, give me that power and I will ask no Congress to pass a bill to enable me to detect fraud.

The trouble is not in the dishonest pensioners; it is not because of their intention of obtaining money fraudulently. The trouble is that the head that administers the laws is not competent for it. There is the trouble, sir. Make a man Commissioner of Pensions who has ability to administer the law as it is written in the statutes, and you will have no necessity for any amendment to your pension law.

The Senator from Virginia thought he had made a great point when he said that pension agents were hovering around this Capitol. No pension agent has ever spoken to me, nor would I allow one in any way to influence me in my action in reference to this question. I was sorry that he brought that into this argument; that does not look like high and elevated argumentation when a man wishes to lug in some little thing outside to affect a bill, and talks of pension agents and claim agents. I have heard that before; it has no terrors for me, sir.

But Senators talk about petitions being sent out by claim agents. Ah, sir, petitions have been sent out on both sides. I will not say by whom on the side that the Senator advocates, but equally as dishonorable a performance as the one on the other side if what he states is true. I will not dabble in the dirty waters of claim agents, or any of the mud stirred up by the Commissioner of Pensions, in order to either advocate and advance this bill or to defeat it.

What is the effect of this bill? Not to benefit the soldier, not to protect the Government. What do you do? You appoint in this bill a board of surgeons in each district. You have surgeons there now. If they are not competent, turn them out and put in others. You have a surgeon in almost every county. In nearly every county in my State the Pension Commissioner has appointed examining surgeons, and in the city of Chicago there is a board of examining surgeons, and all gentlemen who stand as high in the medical profession as any men in this Nation. So it is all over the country. The surgeons are multiplied when necessary under the law as it exists, even down to counties, to examine pensioners; and yet frauds cannot be detected. Whose fault is it, I ask? Is it the fault of the law? It is not the fault of the law but the fault of the administration of the law.

Mr. CAMERON, of Wisconsin. What would the Senator have the head of the Pension Bureau do? Would he have him send a special agent to examine every one of the 240,000 pensioners now on the roll? Is that what he proposes to do?

Mr. LOGAN. No, sir; because I would not suspect the 240,000 of dishonest men. Section 4774 of the Revised Statutes reads:

The Commissioner of Pensions is authorized to organize, at his discretion, boards of examining surgeons, not to exceed three

members, and each member of a board thus organized who is actually present and makes, in connection with other members or member, an ordered or periodical examination, shall be entitled to the fee of \$1, on the receipt of a proper certificate of such examination by the Commissioner of Pensions.

Sec. 4775. Examining surgeons duly appointed by the Commissioner of Pensions, and such other qualified surgeons as may be employed in the Pension Office, may be required by him, from time to time, as he deems for the interests of the Government, to make special examinations of pensioners, or applicants for pension, and such examinations shall have precedence over previous examinations, whether special or biennial; but when injustice is alleged to have been done by an examination so ordered, the Commissioner of Pensions may, at his discretion, select a board of three duly appointed examining surgeons, who shall meet at a place to be designated by him, and shall review such cases as may be ordered before them on appeal from any special examination, and the decision of such board shall be final on the questions so submitted thereto, provided the Commissioner approve the same. The compensation of each of such surgeons shall be \$3, and shall be paid out of any appropriations made for the payment of pensions, in the same manner as the ordinary fees of appointed surgeons are or may be authorized to be paid.

Sec. 4776. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to appoint a duly qualified surgeon as medical referee, who, under the control and direction of the Commissioner of Pensions, shall have charge of the examination and revision of the reports of examining surgeons, and such other duties touching medical and surgical questions in the Pension Office as the interests of the service may demand; and his salary shall be \$2,500 per annum. And the Secretary of the Interior is further authorized to appoint such qualified surgeons (not exceeding four) as the exigencies of the service may require, who may perform the duties of examining surgeons when so required, and who shall be borne upon the rolls as clerks of the fourth class; but such appointments shall not increase the clerical force of said bureau.

Then, in reference to the agents, he has the same power to appoint agents for the purpose of going over the country and examining pensioners, and does it, and they go into counties and send for pensioners, bring them up and examine them.

Mr. CAMERON, of Wisconsin. They bring up and examine those whom they suspect.

Mr. LOGAN. And whom would you examine? That is exactly what I am talking about. If he has the power to examine those who are suspected now, what more power do you give this board that you want to appoint? He has the power now, and you do not want the board to go calling for every pensioner in the United States to examine him. I presume you only want a board to examine those who are suspected. He has that power now, and he exercises it; hence I say that is the power he has now. If he does not exercise it and stop frauds, it is because he is not qualified to execute the law.

How Sickles Saved His Life.

The way to stop the flow of blood from a bad wound has been so often pointed out that it is generally known, but it is best illustrated by an actual example. When people injured and bleeding are able to help themselves by a simple process, they should certainly love their lives well enough to do so.

That General Sickles is alive to-day is due only to his great presence of mind. When he fell on the field of Gettysburg he fainted. Recovering consciousness, but half dazed, he found he was completely away from immediate help, and that blood was gushing from his leg in jets, showing that an artery was severed.

Painfully raising himself, he found his handkerchief, he tied it around the wound in such a way as to stop the flow and in order to secure additional tightness, ran his sword handle under the handkerchief, and with all his power twisted it around and held it so until the surgeon came on the battle-field. Like most persons he had read directions of what was necessary to be done in such emergencies, but, unlike many persons, he was cool and collected enough to put his reading into practice when the emergency came.

Kind Words from New York.

CENTREVILLE, ALLEGHENY CO., N. Y.,
February 14, 1881.

Editor of The National Tribune:

DEAR SIR: I have received regularly THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE for two years, and it seems the time has run out, and I now inclose fifty cents' worth of postage stamps to renew my subscription for I feel, without your valuable paper in the house, as though one of the family was gone, and that I cannot endure. You will please commence with the February number. I have said nothing about the clock you sent to me a year ago, because I wanted to see if it would stand the recommendation, which it has. It is a beauty and perfect timekeeper, and I wish I could afford one of them in each room in the house. I wish I could have THE NATIONAL TRIBUNE every week; it is the soldier's friend. It reminds me of reinforcements. How glad we were to see reinforcements coming. This from your well-wisher.

DAVID W. WILLIAMS.

Attention, Soldiers!

There is a large class of ex-volunteer officers and soldiers, principally of the cavalry arm of the service, who, after the fall of Richmond, were, with their commands, ordered to the Plains to fight Indians, or to Texas, on the river Rio Grande, to watch marauding Mexicans. These men were mostly veteran volunteers, and had enlisted for "during the war," or for one, two, or three years, "unless sooner discharged," by reason of the close of the war. In all cases the understanding, both on the part of the Government and the soldier, was that when the rebellion should have been put down they would be discharged; but when the Government violated its contract with these brave men and ordered them to the Plains or to Texas, large numbers of them, having served the Government faithfully according to the terms of their enlistment, left for their homes, and were marked on the rolls as deserters, thus forfeiting all pay, bounty, and other allowances, except, probably, pension. All survivors of this class, and the heirs of such as have died, are requested to send to this paper their full names, with rank, company, regiment, and post-office address. By so doing they may reap an unexpected benefit.

Any of our subscribers who know of any persons embraced in the classes referred to will confer a favor on the latter by sending us their names, &c., as above.

For sponge cake, take 4 eggs, 2 cups of sugar; beat eggs and sugar well together; 2 coffee-cups of flour, 1 heaping tablespoonful of baking-powder; stir in all the flour that the eggs and sugar will take up; then add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of boiling water; bake in a quick oven.